

ST. MARY MACKILLOP PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Staying Connected No. 1 30 January, 2026

Hi Everyone,

We are thrilled to open our gates and welcome our children and families for the 2026 school year. It's wonderful to see you all back for another year of learning and growth. Of course, we will be delighted to welcome our Prep class for 2026 on Monday.

We look forward to you all discovering and learning all that you can.

Our school theme for this year is 'Pray, Trust, Act'.

Pope Leo has declared 2026 the Jubilee Year of St Francis of Assisi; a man of prayer.

Pope Leo recently reminded us of the essential place of prayer in our lives, drawing on the wisdom of **St Francis of Assisi**, who taught that prayer must always come before action:

"Time dedicated to prayer, meditation, and reflection cannot be lacking in the Christian's day and week. Only when we speak with God can we also speak about Him." (Leo X1V)

Like St Francis, Pope Leo reminds us that prayer is not something we fit in *after* the work is done; it is what shapes the work from the beginning. Without prayer, even good work can lose its direction and heart.

Mary MacKillop lived this same wisdom. Amid uncertainty, challenge and great responsibility, she grounded herself in prayer and deep trust in God. Prayer gave her the courage to act, the patience to persevere, and the humility to serve.

As we go about our daily work, may we follow this shared example; pausing to pray, to listen, and to place our trust in God, so that what we do flows from who we are called to be.

"Never see a need without doing something about it."

May prayer continue to guide both our actions and our spirit in all we do this year in our wonderful school.

Have a great year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony McCluskey".

Anthony McCluskey
Principal

SOME IMPORTANT THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW as we begin our 2026 School Year

Grounds and Facilities

I am most grateful to the team who have been working on **refurbishing our Junior Toilets** over December and January. The Junior Boys are complete and ready for use and we hope the Junior Girls will be completed by Monday next week. In the meantime, the teachers are supporting the children in Prep to Year 3 to use the Senior Toilets.

It has been worth the wait to get quality WC facilities for the children with soap and warm water.

We have written to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) who owns and operates St. Mary MacKillop Primary School. We have requested urgent funding to **upgrade our oval** as a play space and learning area for Phys.Ed. We are not seeking embellishment or anything elaborate; we are simply seeking to create a safe space for children to play. I think you would all agree the oval as it is, is below standard, despite our continued efforts to maintain it.

We have senior staff from MACS visiting next week and hopefully we can get things happening to improve the facility.

We have the support of our Parish Priest and School Advisory Council.

Our theme for 2026 is **Pray, Trust, Act.** So, please, get praying, trusting and hopefully we will get some action!

Pre-Conditions for Effective Learning at St Mary MacKillop Primary School

We know effective learning does not happen by accident; it happens by design. By ensuring calm environments, minimalist classrooms, low variance and consistent whole-school routines, we create the conditions where every child can learn and every teacher can teach.

At St Mary MacKillop Primary School, our collective commitment to high-quality learning requires that we deliberately establish and maintain the pre-conditions for effective learning. These structures ensure that every child is set up for success, classrooms operate with consistency, and instructional time is maximised.

During 2026 we will be establishing a new structures and expectations to ensure:

Calm, Orderly and Predictable Environments

- Clear routines for entering, settling, transitioning, and exiting.
- Consistent behaviour expectations across all spaces.

Classroom Set-Up: Minimalism and Low Variance

- Tables arranged to promote focus and visibility.
- Minimalist classrooms to reduce cognitive load.
- Low variance in routines and expectations to support fairness, safety and efficiency.

Whole-School Routines

- Clear entry and exit expectations.
- A single school-wide call for attention.
- Shared routines for materials, books, transitions, and independent work.

Research Supporting Play-First Lunchtimes

- Students eat more of their lunch when play comes first, reducing rush and improving nutrition.
- Behaviour incidents decrease following calmer eating times (ACER, 2020).
- Improved focus when students are fed, hydrated, and settled (VDET, 2021).
- Predictable break routines support wellbeing, self regulation and positive peer interactions (Australian Student Wellbeing Framework 2018)

To this end, we have altered our timetable to have eating time after the break.

In saying this, we are aware that it will be 11:30 before the children have their lunch. To ensure children are not hungry, we will be introducing a 'Fruit Break' around 10:00am each morning. This break will be flexible and organised according to individual class routines.

We ask that you supply your child with a piece of fruit.



Fruit Break

When: around 10:00am daily

What: Fresh, raw or plain fruit /vegetable

Quantity: 1 item

There will be a limited choice of fresh fruit delivered twice a week for students who forget their fruit.

YES

fresh, raw, or plain vegetables or/fruit
e.g small carrot, cucumber, tomatoes in a named bag, container of fruit e.g blueberries or grapes, chopped fruit e.g. apple slices in a named bag, *small box of dried fruit (sultanas, raisins)



NO

processed, dried or packaged snacks
e.g. chips, yoghurt, nuts, seeds, fruit bars, Roll-Ups, fruit canned in syrup, fruit jellies, dips, condiments, chocolate covered fruit, juice box, crackers, popcorn



*Dried fruit should only be eaten occasionally, e.g. once a week, as it sticks to teeth increasing the risk of tooth decay.

All of these initiatives support MACS mandated document: Vision for Engagement

We are also very focussed on explicit teaching in English, Maths, Science and the Humanities. These teaching approaches are in direct response to MACS mandated document; Vision for Instruction.

We will have a lot more on this to come over the year.

DATES TO REMEMBER

TERM DATES

TERM 1: Friday 30 January - Thursday 02 April (Good Friday 03 April)

TERM 2: Monday 20 April - Friday 26 June

TERM 3: Monday 13 July - Friday 18 September

TERM 4: Monday 05 October - Tuesday 15 December

(Year 6 finish Friday 11 Dec)

IMPORTANT DATES TO NOTE: 2026

Friday 30 January

Years 1 to 6 start @ 9.00am

Monday 02 February

Preps start @ 9.00am

Wednesday 04 February and Wednesday 11 February

No school for Prep students

Tuesday 17 February

Parent Teacher Conversations 1pm to 6pm-more details to come

School Advisory Council Meeting @ 6pm

Wednesday 18 February

Parent Teacher Conversations 3.45pm to 6pm-more details to come

Friday 6 March

School Closure for MACS Review 2026-just added to the calendar

Monday 09 March

Labour Day Public Holiday

Tuesday 10 March

Reconciliation Family Faith Evening @ 7pm-MPR

Wednesday 11 March to Monday 23 March

Naplan for Years 3 and 5

Monday 23 and Tuesday 24 March

School Photos

Thursday 26 March

Year 3 First Reconciliation @ 12pm

Thursday 02 April

End of Term 1: Students finish @ 1pm

TERM 2

Monday 20 April

School Closure for MACS Review 2026

Wednesday 6 May

Wonder of Life Ed-Year 5 @ 6.30pm-more details to come

Thursday 7 May

Wonder of Life Ed-Year 6 @ 6.30pm-more details to come

Wednesday 20 May

Holy Communion Family Faith Evening @ 7pm-MPR

Saturday 30 May

Sacraments of the Holy Communion @ 10.30am and 12.30pm

Monday 8 June

King's Birthday Public Holiday

Wednesday 10 June

Confirmation Family Faith Evening @ 7pm-MPR

Saturday 20 June

Sacrament of Confirmation @ 10am and 12pm

Friday 26 June

End of Term 2 Students finish @ 1pm

School is better when your child is here

Going to school every day is the most important part of your child's education. There are no safe number of days for missing school – each day a student misses puts them behind and can affect their educational outcomes and their social connectedness. The best thing you can do is support your child to get to school every day.

A positive attitude towards school, healthy habits and routines, and parental involvement can support your child's regular school attendance and prevent chronic absence patterns.

When your child misses just... they miss...
5 mins per day = 3 days per year

When your child misses just... they miss...
1 day per fortnight = 4 weeks per year = 1 year missed over their school life

When your child misses just... they miss...
30 mins = 18 days per year

When your child misses just... they miss...
1 day per week = 8 weeks per year = 2.5 years missed over their school life

Adapted from material © State of New South Wales (Department of Education), 2023

1. Establish positive habits to promote attendance

- Set good bedtime and morning routines to make the process of getting to school smoother for everyone. Try to prepare as much as possible the night before, e.g. school uniform, school bag packed.
- Ensure your child gets enough sleep and exercise to support their physical and mental health.
- Talk positively about the importance of school attendance with your child. Explain that it is an important part of growing up, a legal obligation and that you expect them to attend every day.
- Show an interest in your child's school and become involved where possible. Keep notes, newsletters, etc. in a place where they are visible reminders of school news for the whole family. Talk about school activities in a positive manner.
- Discuss any changes to usual routines in advance with your child, such as alternative drop-off and pick-up arrangements, to ensure clarity and minimise anxiety.

Further Resources

[Anxiety about going to school](#) – Victorian Government

[Attendance and missing school](#) – Victorian Government

[How can I get my teenager to school?](#) – Victorian Government

[Early Signs of School Avoidance/Refusal](#) – Travancore School

[Tips for Promoting School Attendance](#) – Travancore School

[Understanding School Avoidance and School Refusal](#) – Travancore School

[School refusal: children and teenagers](#) – Raising Children Network

[Understanding school refusal](#) – Headspace

[School refusal](#) – Be You Everything you need to know about school refusal

2. Changes in your child's attitude towards school

We all have those days when it is just too hard to get up and feel motivated to go to work or school, but if this occurs regularly, it may be a sign that your child needs support. Early intervention is vital to address physical, emotional or social reasons for school avoidance before it progresses to chronic absence problems and on to school refusal.

Signs of school avoidance to look out for

- feeling sick before school, e.g. waking up with a headache, stomach-ache or sore throat
- tearfulness, clinginess and dawdling before school – struggling to get out of bed, leave the house or get out of the car
- complaints about attending school and reluctance to talk about school
- missing classes and being late for class.

What is happening at school?

Early signs of school avoidance may be identified at school through observations and insights by your child's teachers. Work in partnership with the school to support your child's attendance and wellbeing.

3. What can you do when you see the signs?

- Work with your child to understand what is happening and so that they feel supported and empowered. Listen with compassion but be consistent in expectations.
- Speak with your child's teacher(s) about your concerns.
- Consider taking your child to the GP to rule out or address any physical or emotional health problems.
- Request and attend school meetings with your child and their teacher to develop strategies to support increased attendance.



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

ST. AUGUSTINE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

FAIR EXTRAORDINAIRE

FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2026
4.00PM - 8.30PM



RIDES, CARNIVAL AMUSEMENTS, FOOD
TRUCKS, MARKET STALLS, DJ AND MUCH MORE!



SCAN TO PURCHASE TICKETS!



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